

*Present Status*  
*OF THE*  
*High School in Illinois*

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To judge fairly of a system of education in a given state one must know something of the conditions from which that system is an outgrowth. It would be an impossible task, for instance, to one whose active connection with schools had always been in Cook county to undertake to legislate fairly for schools in Jefferson or Alexander county. With equal difficulty would the provincial from either of the latter counties be able to determine justly the school conditions for Cook county.

There are few, if any, states in the Middle West which present the problem here expressed with any such force as does Illinois. In any legislative movement concerning education, or any other cause for that matter, her great extent through latitude becomes an ever present and stubborn factor. To one who is familiar with the varying causes, natural and social, which have thus far determined educational conditions, it would be amusing, if the case were less serious, to hear provincials discussing the relative excellencies of their school conditions.

It is not enough merely that one see the schools in their local settings. One must mingle enough with the people of a given section to enable him to realize what different currents of migration setting westward from the original colonies, and later from Europe, have brought to these widely different latitudes of the state in the way of educational ideals. He must not only know from history what effect the institution of slavery has had upon the educational ideals of the slaveholder and his descendants, but he should recognize also the retardation of progress of the public school in communities which are largely the unconscious inheritors of this arrested growth.

Again, the student of Illinois school problems needs to have a sufficient working knowledge of geology to enable him to know and appreciate what the Glacial Epoch stands for in Illinois. He should know that even if social conditions were alike the problem of financing the schools would be vastly different south of the lowest reach of the terminal mo-



raines from that in the territory lying to the northward of this line.

Furthermore, he must come to realize the influence of the carboniferous age upon our educational growth, and to understand what serious problems in some cases, and what golden possibilities in others, have been entailed by the wide distribution of the coal measures in Illinois. In one case he would find a community consisting of a large preponderance of foreign mine workers with large families, little or no property, and scarcely a glimmer of enlightenment as to the ideals of American social life. In other cases he would find largely increased values with the control of things in the hands of the American element, and hence with schools well equipped and well organized or with these conditions easily possible so far as financial resources are concerned.

It is by no means safe to assume, however, that school conditions always correspond to the wealth or poverty of a given section. As will later appear, the people of some sections will tax

themselves to the legal limit and beyond in order to have good schools, while in some of the richest sections of Illinois the schools are at the lowest stage of efficiency.

All this is but saying that in a democracy the schools, along with other institutions, must be of the people, taken with all their natural limitations and acquired habits of thought and action in regard to the public interests. Strong centralized governments may plant in communities institutions which would be entirely foreign to that community, and by such means succeed in transforming the community life, at least to all outward appearances. Whoever reads the history of Illinois legislation, however, especially along educational lines, must certainly be convinced that the trend of sentiment in this commonwealth has not yet set towards any such centralization policy. Indeed, no one has yet defined the limit beyond which it is unwise or undemocratic, in the truest and largest sense, for the will of the majority to exercise

absolute control over any considerable minority.

But laying aside this philosophizing, let us get at once to the more definite task of summarizing the present conditions with regard to public secondary education in Illinois.

There are in this state about 400 high schools, including those offering three and four year courses. These schools, in 1904-5 employed about 1800 teachers and enrolled 45,783 pupils. They are distributed freely throughout northern and central Illinois, but are few and scattering in the southern one-third of the state.

The high school in this state exists primarily, not as a separate institution, but as a part of the free, graded school system. The general free school law of Illinois has never undertaken to define a high school. It simply gives to Boards of Education the authority "to establish schools of different grades," as the needs of the community may require. Nowhere is the high school mentioned in the law previous to the



enactment of the Township High School measure. It is a fortunate thing that the secondary feature in our school system has grown thus directly out of the local demands of the people, who have thus become accustomed to thinking of it as an essential part of the common schools. This right of the people of a community to maintain schools for the teaching of subjects other than the common branches has been duly affirmed and established by the decisions of the courts, and under this sanction of law as the expressed will of the people the high schools of the state have had a rapid and virile growth.

One limitation to this development has crept in, however, which could not have been foreseen by the framers of our present constitution. This is in the provision made for the financial support of the public schools. When the framers of the fundamental laws of the state placed the limitation in the tax levy for school purposes at five per cent for all purposes they could not have foreseen two factors in the problem

which are largely of subsequent development. The first of these was the fixing upon one-fifth of the real valuation of property as a basis for assessing taxes, thus putting the total possible amount obtainable below the actual public demands of many Illinois communities. The second is the very rapid development of the public high school during the last decade or more, and the extension of its courses from two and three to four years, with a corresponding demand for greatly increased facilities. This growth upward of the schools could scarcely have been foreseen twenty-five years ago.

When we consider at what cost of travel to the world has come about the desire for the general enlightenment of all classes of people, it is distressing enough to find a large community of people willing and anxious to increase the burden of taxation upon themselves in order to be able to support within the sanction of the law, the schools which are the measure of their desires in local education.

Under our present system all the



high schools are located in cities or towns; and, with the exception of the thirty-six township high schools, they are supported willingly by the comparatively small school districts to which they are confined. In the figures and facts which follow, we have not included Cook county. With its twenty-eight well organized and equipped high schools, its high standards of qualification demanded of its teachers, it stands in a class by itself so far as the problems we need most to consider here are concerned. We are compelled also to omit from the count the four counties of Calhoun, Hardin, Polk, and Putnam which contain no high schools.

The other 97 counties of Illinois represent 53,852 square miles of territory of which only 2,331 square miles are included in free high school districts. The largest high school area in any one of these counties is  $151\frac{3}{8}$  square miles, in LaSalle county, with its three great township high schools. The average high school area per county is about 24

square miles, or two-thirds of one township! Now the people of these high school districts are carrying most of the burden of the cost of all our high schools. A vast majority of these people live on wage-earnings and salaries, and most of those who own their homes do so by the practice of great frugality. Those who pay rent are assessed the property tax in their rental, while they share in common with all consumers the increase in cost price which taxation adds to what they must pay for food, fuel and clothing. The landholder shares with them and with the merchants, manufacturers and holders of city property, all the advantages of better education which the high schools make possible. The great advance in land values, the improved methods of tillage, and harvesting, and the greater productiveness due to the scientific treatment of soils, he owes in a large measure to the discoveries of science, the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the greater intelligence of a larger number of men and women. Yet the landholder returns little or

nothing from this great increase to the support of the public high schools.

Of the 264,151 farms of Illinois, 103,698, or nearly one-half, are rented. Most of the owners of these rented farms live in the cities and towns, enjoying the advantages of schools and enlightenment while the chief part of their wealth contributes nothing in return.

There are also in Illinois a large number of coal mines most of which lie outside of high school districts. Nearly one hundred of the cities and towns supporting high schools are more or less populated by miners and mine operators who work these mines, but whose children must be provided for educationally out of the public purse; yet these great mineral privileges contribute little or nothing to the support of our high schools.

In order to show more effectively the inequality of the burden of school taxation, let us review briefly some facts about tax rates. The average rate of levy for public school maintenance in Illinois, exclusive of building fund, is



\$1.77 per \$100. In the case of 91 high school districts the corresponding levy is \$2.50 per \$100 and over; while in 218 of these districts the rate is \$2.00 and over per \$100.

To make the difference in cost due to high schools more apparent, we may take the following figures from eight representative counties:

	Adams
1—Rate of levy for entire County....	1.53
2—Av. levy for H. S. Dists.....	1.97
3—Lowest levy for H. S. Dists .....	1.45
4—Highest levy for H. S. Dists.....	2.50

In considering lowest and highest rates, only schools accredited at the University have been counted.

Here we observe that the average rate of levy for high school districts is higher than the average levy for the state in five out of the eight counties.

To show more clearly the disadvantage under which the people of southern Illinois labor, compare some coun-

ties from the above table. Champaign county at a rate of \$1.36 produces a school fund of \$201,420, and Livingston county at a rate of \$1.15 produces \$180,475; while Wayne county at the higher rate of \$1.68 produces only \$47,645. Iroquois county at the very low rate of \$1.11 produces \$135,209 for schools, while Jefferson county at

Champaign	Fulton	Iroquois	Jefferson	Livingston	Macoupin	Wayne
1.36	1.72	1.11	1.87	1.15	1.46	1.68
1.22	2.30	1.82	2.62	1.83	2.29	3.10
.95	2.04	1.69	.....	.75	2.11	.....
1.50	2.52	2.10	.....	2.28	2.50	.....

the high rate of \$1.87 produces only \$50,505.

Even in the amount of tuition collected for those attending from outside the high school districts, Boards of Education usually get much less than the actual cost to them of maintaining a high school. Some investigations along this line reveal the following facts:

187 high schools report 3310 tuition students for 1904-5 out of an enrollment of 25,638. These paid something over \$70,000 in tuition, or about \$375 per school, on the average. The rates of tuition charged vary from \$1.00 per month to \$75.00 per year. The average rate would come somewhere between \$2.00 and \$2.50 per month; while the actual average cost of high schools per pupil for a year, based on enrollment, is \$39.58, or an average of about \$4.40 per month. According to this the 187 schools should have received for the 3310 tuition pupils \$130,000 instead of \$70,000.

We often hear it said, where it is proposed to vote on a township high school proposition, that the farmers will have good cause for complaint if the town votes an additional tax upon them. I submit that the ground for complaint is more justly on the side of the townspeople as the matter now stands, and that in voting a township high school these townspeople are simply demanding at the hands of the landholders and mine operators their just share in the



support of the schools which furnish to the state a large proportion of its most intelligent labor, its most competent clerical help, two-thirds and more of all its teachers, and prepare a vast army of boys and girls, including many sons and daughters of farmers, to enter with credit upon the training offered by our normal schools, colleges and universities.

A recent census of high school teachers shows the following conditions in 146 of the schools fully accredited at the state university: There are employed in these 146 schools 961 teachers mostly exclusive of special teachers of music, drawing and manual training. Of these 961 teachers, 527 are graduates of colleges and universities of recognized standing; 332 are graduated of lesser institutions other than normal schools, or have taken considerable university work but without graduation; 105 are graduates of normal schools only, while 26 are simply high school graduates. As a whole, they are a fine body of teachers and may

readily be taken as representing the best trained of all our teaching force.

There is no general law in Illinois outside of Chicago for the certification of high school teachers, unless the law providing for the granting of state certificates be so considered. But this is in no sense compulsory as a prerequisite to teaching in a high school. One may be appointed to teach any or all the subjects of the high school curriculum and still hold only a second grade county certificate. In other words, our high school teachers are classed with those who meet the minimum requirements to teach in any elementary school in the state. In spite of this rather astonishing inconsistency of our laws, however, the demands of Boards and Superintendents have succeeded in maintaining a reasonably high standard of qualifications for secondary teachers.

The greatest weakness as regards the teaching force of the high schools is their uncertain tenure, especially in the smaller schools. As yet we have no adequate training place for secondary

teachers except that they begin in a small school where it is supposed that they earn less, and if they survive the heroic treatment of such apprenticeship they are speedily called to the stronger schools which are not willing to use a portion of their strength in training the beginners just out of our colleges and universities. This throws all the strain of preparation on the smaller schools, the ones least able to bear such a strain. Why should not a teacher in a small high school get just as good, or better pay than in a large, smoothly running one?

In the matter of buildings and equipments of our high schools considerable progress is noticeable. Most of the newer buildings erected are modern in construction, and much thought is given to architectural stability and beauty as well as to good sanitary conditions. The township buildings are, as a rule, of superior type. The fine new fireproof structures erected by the city of Chicago, as exemplified in the Wendell Phillips and McKinley schools, mark a new era in the con-



struction of homes for great secondary schools. Some of the recent buildings of smaller cities, such as those of Galesburg and Kewanee are also notable as setting a new and very high standard in this field of architecture.

The equipment of laboratories and libraries has assumed serious proportions in these recent years. For a hundred high schools, taken at random over the state, we find the average investment for physical apparatus to be about \$700, and that for biological apparatus about \$200. Very many of the smaller schools have only about \$200 of total investment in these lines, while in a number of larger schools the investment reaches well up into the thousands. There is what would seem to me to be a fatal tendency on the part of the weaker schools to invest their slender resources in a few expensive pieces for demonstration purposes, when much more might be gotten for individual experimentation and measurements which, while costing much less by the piece, are even more serviceable than the heavier pieces. Many

schools also fail to realize that the best laboratory is an organization rather than a mere aggregation. It is not always the best equipment that produces the best results. The test is in the manner of use that is made of the materials at hand.

In the matter of libraries, while there are many schools still much impoverished in this respect, yet the general showing is very encouraging. The day of buying books of a general character entirely unrelated to the work of the high school is passed by for most communities in Illinois. The tendency is more and more to invest library funds in books for reference purposes, and those of a special nature rather than so many of the encyclopaedic type.

For the same 100 schools referred to in connection with apparatus we found the high school libraries to contain an average of 600 volumes, while sixty out of the 100 have access to public libraries besides.

As to the high school curriculum, the conditions throughout the state are much more uniform than might at first

be supposed. An examination of the courses offered by 190 accredited schools reveals the following facts:

162 of the 190 schools offer four years of English, including rhetoric and literature with reviews of grammar. 139 offer four years of Latin, although in many of these the subject is wholly or partially elective. 113 offer German, mostly as an elective, and in 65 of these the course is for two years. About 147 schools out of the 190 offer some commercial subjects, varying in amount from  $\frac{1}{2}$  a year to 4 years of work. The course in mathematics is very generally for three years. In science work 9 offer two to two and a half years, 80 offer three years, 18 three and a half, and 79, four. In history and civics 24 offer four years, 70 offer to three and a half, 82, two to two and a half, and 12 only one to one and a half. Of foreign languages other than Latin and German, there are 21 offering Greek, 17 French, and 1 Spanish. Taking the plurality numbers for each subject the dominant offering would be as follows:



English . . . . .	4 yrs.
Latin . . . . .	4 yrs.
Science . . . . .	3 yrs.
Hist. & Civics . . . . .	2 to 2½ yrs.
Mathematics . . . . .	3 yrs.
German . . . . .	2 yrs.
Commercial . . . . .	1 yr.
Greek . . . . .	2 yrs.
French . . . . .	2 yrs.

In the matter of electives, 32 of the 190 have none; 31 offer a very few subject electives; 48 have election by courses with, usually, a limited amount of subject election in each course; 64 have election by subjects with these, in nearly all cases, partially prescriptive. In the latter case, the prescriptions usually decrease after the first year.

The enrollment in our high schools is steadily increasing. During the past five years this increase has been more rapid than either that of school population or of the total school enrollment. The ratio of high school enrollment to school population during the five years from 1900 to 1904 inclusive is as follows:

1900 . . . . . 1 to 41

1901.....	I to 39
1902.....	I to 38
1903.....	I to 36
1904.....	I to 32

During the same period the ratio of male to female has remained practically the same. These ratios are:

1900.....	I to 1.59
1901.....	I to 1.55
1902.....	I to 1.55
1903.....	I to 1.50
1904.....	I to 1.47

thus showing a slight increase in favor of the males.

Such are the high school conditions in Illinois today. There is much of which we may justly be proud, yet the room for improvement is still great. We have found in our brief review of the situation a marked tendency toward local initiative in the development of the high school, rather than a tendency toward centralization.

It will be a long time, if, indeed, it ever occurs, before Illinois will follow the example of New York or even Minnesota.

The arguments in favor of central-

ized control we readily understand. What Chicago can do by the planting of a Medill or Lake High School in their particular environments towards transforming and uplifting a community otherwise a serious social and political problem, the State of Illinois might do by means of state control of high schools. But it is not certain that such control would be best in the long run. Institutions thrust upon a people can never supplant those which develop from the people. Their ultimate adoption and voluntary support would long remain an uncertainty.

On the other hand there is no room for doubt as to the present feeling of our people. The township high school as a local option matter, while it is a make-shift, is an excellent relief measure which will be still more in favor when we can get through a wagon bill.

We must find some way for the removal of the present limitations to taxation, if we are to move forward to the position of which Illinois should take in secondary education.

At the present time our high schools





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are business, for industrial pursuits, for teaching, which the state offer the young men and women. have seen that a large proportion them offer technical business training. While they prepare over two thirds of our teachers, little is being done for them at present for the technical training of teachers. Scarcely any special training is given for those who are to enter industrial pursuits.

We are now facing the problem of how far we are to develop the technical training phase of our secondary schools. Shall we undertake to pattern after Germany with her social stratification and her fixed conditions and trade guilds and imitate the continuation schools of Munich recently so described by Dr. Paul Hanus? Shall we adhere to a good thorough general training for citizenship and broad manhood, rather than for particular vocations, and leave the latter to colleges and normal schools, or at least to post graduate courses in our secondary schools?